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STATE PLS PASS TO NEA/I, S/CT AND EU/SE DOUG SILLIMAN

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SUBJECT: CENTCOM COMMANDER'S MEETING WITH DEPUTY OF THE
TURKISH GENERAL STAFF

REF: A. AMBASSADOR ERIC S. EDELMAN

[1](#)B. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman: Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY. GEN Abizaid met with Turkey's DCHOD GEN Ilker Basbug on January 12. Both presented assessments of Iraq, Afghanistan, and U.S.-TU relations. Basbug reiterated the objectives of Turkish policies on Iraq-united, peaceful, democratic, and whole. Both sides agreed the upcoming elections were critical and Basbug noted Turkey's consistent urging of strong Sunni participation. Kirkuk's unique status also remains high on the list of Turkish concerns. Basbug described the U.S.-Turkish relationship as strong and based on common interests, claiming that media stories don't truly reflect the state of our relationship. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) On January 12, GEN Abizaid met with GEN Ilker Basbug, Deputy Chief, Turkish General Staff, to discuss the security situation and upcoming election in Iraq, Afghanistan, and U.S.-Turkish relations. Accompanying Basbug were TGS Chief of Operations (J-3) LG Metin Yavuz Yalcin, TGS Chief Plans and Principles (J-5) LG Aydogan Babaoglu, and Executive Secretary MAJ Murat Yetkin. GEN Abizaid was joined by the

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Ambassador, EUCOM Director of Strategy, Plans and Assessments MG Scott Gration, Turkey Office of Defense Cooperation Chief MG Peter Sutton, GEN Abizaid's Executive Officer Col Joe Reynes, PolMilCouns, and Turkey DATT Roman Hrycaj (notetaker).

[1](#)3. (C) GEN Basbug began by describing the U.S.-Turkish relationship as "...a strong and unique partnership and friendship based on shared common ways and interests." He added that, "We believe coordination, consultation and cooperation between allies is important and can overcome all possible problems." Then directing his thoughts directly to GEN Abizaid he said, "You are carrying a heavy and historic responsibility on your shoulders."

[1](#)4. (C) After expressing his appreciation for GEN Basbug's hospitality, GEN Abizaid assessed current conditions in Iraq. He said, and the situation in Iraq is very complex and easily misunderstood by outside observers. He described the old order as not completely defeated, but resilient and desperate to remain in power. Salifist and Al-Zargawi extremist types hate the idea of elections and would do anything to prevent them. He predicted, that Shi'a, Kurds and Turkmen would participate strongly. The Sunni would, too, except for the intimidation. On this election they would be underrepresented, but that shouldn't interfere with the selection of a representative Iraqi government with a future for all. GEN Abizaid said he thought all groups will reach out to the Sunni and all will participate in developing a new constitution, but the process of drafting and ratifying a new constitution was more important--and more fraught with difficulty--than attaining participation in the election, he added.

[1](#)5. (C) Gen. Abizaid noted that Turkey's role was crucial to success in Iraq. He added, that he was confident problems could be overcome by liaison work and discussions at every level. He reiterated our goal of an Iraq without terrorist groups or sanctuaries and saw interests of Turkey, the United States and Iraq, too, as congruent. GEN Abizaid also pointed out that since 30 June 2004, more Iraqi soldiers and police have died in Iraq than Americans, a fact he said is lost on both the Turkish and American publics. Abizaid stressed that the insurgency in Iraq was not a revolt of the Sunni community. Since many if not most of the casualties are Sunni. He continued, "What we are doing in Iraq is important for Iraq and the region, and will ultimately be successful." GEN Abizaid also noted the U.S. military effort in Iraq cannot be successful without the logistical flow through Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Turkey.

[1](#)6. (C) GEN Basbug responded that the Turkish public's position on Iraq has been well known by U.S. officials. He said the main objective of Turkish policies is a united, peaceful and democratic Iraq. Keeping Iraq's political and territorial integrity is also very important. Basbug asked if there were a possibility the elections might not occur on

30 January. GEN Abizaid responded, that the clear U.S. position is that the elections will take place 30 January, but that they weren't U.S. elections. The Iraqi government makes the decisions regarding the polls, he noted. He added that the Iraqi government is planning for 30 January, and that there would be no exceptions. The CENTCOM commander detailed additional thoughts. He expects the polls to be open in Mosul, but opined that if the voter intimidation (directed primarily against the Sunni) is successful, the Sunni Arab turnout will be less than the Shi'a or Kurds. However, there are Sunni names on every ballot. GEN Abizaid reminded Basbug that the people against the elections are desperate, knowing they can't survive them after having committed crimes (including mass murder) for 30 years. Abizaid concluded by saying he believed that in the period immediately after the elections there would be violence against the new leaders, but a civil war was unlikely (though CENTCOM will vigilantly look for warning signs).

17. (C) GEN Basbug referred to recent tensions in the Mosul area and asked about its effect. GEN Abizaid replied that Mosul had seen a decrease in tension as insurgent activity now is less than a week ago because of U.S. Army battalions and an ING battalion had been moved to Mosul. He noted the situation had improved to the point that in some neighborhoods people were applauding as captured insurgents were taken away. However, he also said he thinks the enemy will try to kill as many as possible in the next few days.

18. (C) GEN Basbug agreed with Abizaid that the insurgents are trying to stop the elections, but expressed the belief that if the election proceeds and the results are accepted, the security situation will improve. Basbug expected the post-election period when the constitution would be drafted and put to a referendum, would be difficult. He said he thought the discussion about the constitution would be more contentious than the elections "by far". Basbug worried that the TAL gave the Kurds a veto over the constitution; GEN Abizaid noted that the TAL actually gives a veto to any three provinces, noting that these could also be Sunni provinces. GEN Abizaid added that many of the unanswered questions will be decided in the process of creating and approving a new constitution: e.g. What is the role of Islam in government?, Will there be federal zones?, Will the structure of government have one or two chambers?, etc. GEN Abizaid concluded that once a constitution is written that guarantees personal rights, it will contribute to stability.

19. (C) The Turkish DCHOD turned to Kirkuk, stating that Turkey is paying great attention to its status. Basbug thought that the special status of Baghdad and Kirkuk, as required by the Transitional Administrative Law, might be a top problem for the constitutional process. However, he also admitted that the Turkish military does not see another option for Iraq, i.e. coalition/U.S. forces must be successful. Basbug said he saw three aspects to the problem: military, economic, and political. While hoping the elected Iraqi government would be seen as legitimate by the Iraqi people and predicting a bright future for the country, he also suggested future success depended on developing Iraq's military and security forces. GEN Basbug said Turkey had been "fully supportive" of NATO's decision to train and equip forces and made a proposal to NATO. Some of the offered training, like border security and law of armed conflict had been "very much welcomed". Although the IIG had informed Ankara that senior Iraqi military leaders are unable to participate in out-of-country training at this time, Basbug hoped after the elections some senior officers could attend such training in Turkey.

110. (C) The DCHOD turned to the NATO Mission in Afghanistan, asking GEN Abizaid if he has any ideas on how to overcome shortfalls in meeting NATO requirements. GEN Abizaid thought NATO was too slow in meeting the requirements in Afghanistan. He said that the training mission was key: it was important to change the culture so that security forces understood that they now served the people, not a dictator. The same was true for Iraq, he said. Iraq won't emerge from darkness until their forces are well trained, well equipped, and well led.

111. (C) GEN Basbug asked for Abizaid's assessment of the new Iraqi military's effectiveness. GEN Abizaid explained that the army was built from the ground up, but he noted a need to build a chain of command. He also described the Iraqis as solid, loyal, professionals, who, ...when they performed with us in Fallujah, did well." GEN Abizaid noted that insurgents have concentrated on attacking Iraqi Police, and that in earlier instances the police ran and did not fight, but that with more training, of late, the police had fought well. He added that the police also learned that a police unit that surrenders may be executed by the insurgents anyway. Finally, GEN Abizaid said the military justice system in Iraq was not functioning and there have been cases where lawful orders were not followed and nothing happened to the offenders.

¶12. (C) GEN Basbug raised the Turkish forces in Northern Iraq. Saying that, "Turkey has liaison officers (LNOs) with U.S. forces in Tal A'far, Kirkuk, and Mosul and that the level of liaison cooperation was at a satisfactory level. He noted the U.S. liaison working with Turkish Special Forces in Silopi. He said Turkey was about increasing the level of liaison in Baghdad from one to two officers. In northern Iraq he noted Turkey has small groups of Special Forces, and two battalions and that it has shared the locations of those units with the U.S." He continued, "The presence of Turkish military in northern Iraq is dependent on the PKK in northern Iraq."

¶13. (S) "I don't want to remind again about the As-Suleymaniah event in 2003," Basbug said referring to the incident in which U.S. Special Forces conducted a raid on Turkish Special Forces in northern Iraq. Basbug welcomed the subsequent proposal from EUCOM Commander, GEN Jones, to have meetings between two-star general representatives of the U.S. and Turkey. LG Yalcin interjected that such meetings were not to be routine, but on an as-needed basis, and had even been accomplished by videoconference. GEN Basbug said that we cannot have another incident like As-Suleymaniah, and GEN Abizaid responded that we shouldn't let issues become exaggerated because of press reports.

¶14. (C) GEN Basbug said As-Suleymaniah was an exception, and that he wanted to thank GEN Abizaid for the excellent job U.S. forces did in Mosul to drive off insurgents who attacked the Turkish Police convoy enroute to Baghdad. U.S. forces attacked the insurgents, treated the wounded Turkish Police, recovered the bodies of those killed and expedited the return of the remains back to Turkey.

¶15. (C) GEN Basbug asked GEN Abizaid whether he saw foresaw any possible problems in Afghanistan for the Turkish military taking over command of ISAF. GEN Abizaid replied that the situation in Afghanistan continues to improve, with the next elections being provincial. GEN Abizaid thought there might be a spike in violence and that part of the problem was a lack of proper preparation by Afghan election officials. The elections might be delayed because of violence expected in certain border regions, which would be inevitable as Pakistani military forces moved north and coalition force come south. GEN Basbug agreed the elections might be delayed. GEN Abizaid concluded encouraging other countries to take on PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) particularly. More countries need to lead in the West.

¶16. (C) For his last point, GEN Basbug returned to the U.S.-Turkish military relationship, saying, "We haven't seen any serious lack of consultations, cooperation or coordination." He continued, "Sometimes the media create a slanted story, but media stories don't truly reflect our relationship." As examples of the continuing interaction GEN Basbug explained he was going to visit EUCOM in March and thought the bilateral HLDG (High Level Defense Group) would meet in April. (Comment: We now expect the HLDG to occur in June.)

¶17. (C) AMB Edelman took the opportunity to agree with GEN Basbug that relations, military-to-military and government-to-government, are quite good, but added that both sides needed to work to prevent creation of a public void regarding common interests and values." AMB Edelman stressed both sides have an obligation to "...say it in public."

¶18. (U) Baghdad Minimize Considered.
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